

LOYALTY DUTY RESPECT SELFLESS SERVICE HONOR INTEGRITY PERSONAL COURAGE

# Spc. Ross McGinnis

AND TO ALL THE HEROES OF OPERATION IRAQI FREEDOM

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pc. Ross McGinnis was posthumously awarded the Silver Star and promoted to the rank of specialist for the heroism that cost him his life in Baghdad, Iraq December 4, 2006. McGinnis's unit -- 1st Armored Division's Company C, 1st Battalion, 26th Infantry -- later also nominated the specialist for America's highest honor for heroism in combat, the Medal of Honor. If awarded the medal, McGinnis would become the third U.S. servicemember to be so honored for heroism during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Born in Knox, Pennsylvania, on what may have proved a prophetic date -- June 14, 1987, the U.S. Army's 212th birthday -- McGinnis joined the Army right after graduating high school in 2005. He was the youngest Soldier in Company C. He and his team were on a mission in the Iraqi capital's Adhamiyah section when an insurgent tossed a grenade from a nearby rooftop. McGinnis, who was manning the gunner's hatch of the squad's Humvee, tried in vain to deflect the deadly missile, which passed through the hatch and into the vehicle, lodging near the radio mount. McGinnis's platoon sergeant, Sgt. 1st Class Cedric Thomas, said McGinnis shouted to warn his teammates, then pinned the grenade down with his body, even though he had time to escape the deadly blast. The Silver Star puts McGinnis in the ranks of an elite group of Soldiers.



According to records kept by the U.S. Army Human Resources Command, of the quarter million-plus wartime awards presented in the Army for OIF through July 2006, only 201 were Silver Stars.

If McGinnis is awarded the Medal of Honor, he would join an even more elite

group. United States Army Center of Military History records list more than 3,400 Americans honored with the medal since the Civil War, but McGinnis would be just the third servicemember to earn it for combat action in Iraq. All are posthumous awards. Sgt. Paul Ray Smith of the 3rd Infantry Division was awarded the honor in April 2005 for his actions during

combat in the opening weeks of OIF, and Marine Cpl. Jason L. Dunham was awarded the medal January 11, 2007 for saving the lives of fellow Marines by covering a grenade with his body in April 2004. Because the recommendation

process involves strict accuracy and intense scrutiny, it could be months or even years before such an announcement could be made for McGinnis. Smith's Medal of Honor was awarded two years after the action for which he earned it; the announcement of Dunham's came two and a half years after the Marine's death.

*It is to the memory of those brave Soldiers who have selflessly stepped into harm's path to protect the lives of others that we dedicate this magazine.*

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